

## Message Text

PAGE 01    ASMARA 00551 161353Z

44

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 PC-01

AID-05 IO-13 OMB-01 SY-05 ACDA-07 OC-06 CCO-00 SAM-01

/106 W

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R 151350Z JUL 76

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4051

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0551

C O R R E C T E D   C O P Y (TEXT PARA 6 LINE 7 ADDING INSURGENT)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJECT: EVENTS IN ERITREA: RETURN TO NORMALCY OR COMING TO A BOIL?

REF: ASMARA 0544 DTG 131340Z JUL 76)

1. FOR AN ALLEGED CENTER OF MILITARY DISSIDENCE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IN ADDIS, ASMARA SEEMS PLACID AND APPEARS TO BE PROCEEDING WITH NORMAL FUNCTIONS AS IF NOTHING WERE AMISS. ALL MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AND VITAL POINTS (AIRPORT, TELECOMMUNICATION/RADIO, CITY HALL AND BANKS) HAVE THEIR USUAL SECURITY FORCES ON HAND  
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WITH NO VISIBLE SIGN OF HEIGHTENED ALERTNESS OR INCREASE IN STRENGTH.

2. ON THE AFTERNOON OF JULY 13, THE ESCORT TROOPS (REFTEL PARA 1)

RETURNED FROM DECAMERE AND THE NEXT DAY (JULY 14) ESCORTED THE CONVOY TO MASSAWA.

3. CONGEN HAS RECEIVED RELIABLE REPORTS THAT A DELEGATION OF ERITREAN ELDERS DEPARTED ASMARA BY PLANE ON JULY 13 TO MEET WITH ELF REPS IN THE VILLAGE OF HAGGET (PHONETIC) 30 KM WEST OF KEREN. FROM KEREN THE DELEGATION, WHICH CONSISTS OF THE SAME PERSONNEL BUT CONSIDERABLY REDUCED IN SIZE FROM THAT WHICH MET WITH PLF REPS IN JUNE, IS TO PROCEED BY ROAD TO HAGGET AND FROM THERE TO AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION IN ELF TERRITORY. THE TALKS WERE TO TAKE PLACE JULY 15 AND POSSIBLY 16, AND THE DELEGATION WAS TO RETURN ON THE WEEKEND.

4. RADIO ASMARA HAS NOT RETURNED TO THE AIR SINCE ITS TRANSMISSION FIZZLED ON JULY 13. ALL KEY OFFICIALS OF THE RADIO INSIST THAT IT IS A MECHANICAL PROBLEM IN THE CABLE BETWEEN THE STUDIO AND THE TRANSMISSION SITE.

5. DESPITE THIS APPARENT NORMALITY, THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS OF UNCERTAINTY AT THE TOP. NO SINGLE OFFICIAL HAS STEPPED INTO GEN. GETACHEW'S SHOES AS ACTING MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR. DUTIES ARE DIVIDED. ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE ASMARA BRANCH OF MOFA, VICE CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR HIDAD KARRAR IS "HANDLING ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS" AND COL. TELEHUN, CO OF ETHIOPIAN FORCES IN ERITREA IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MILITARY AFFAIRS. IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER THIS DIVISION IS BY DIRECTION FROM ADDIS OR IS A LOCAL DECISION TO HANDLE DAY-TO-DAY AFFAIRS. AT THIS STAGE PROBABLY NO ONE WISHES TO BE CLEARLY IDENTIFIED AS THE SOLE "ACTING REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR" BECAUSE OF THE RISKS IN AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE BEING LINKED EITHER WITH THE DIRG OR THE MILITARY DISSIDENTS. FURTHER, THERE ARE REPORTS OF ARRESTS BY THE MILITARY OF SEVERAL KEY MILITARY OFFICERS IN ASMARA. TWO OF THESE HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED TO US AS 1) THE CO OF THE MILITARY POLICE DETACHMENT, AND 2) A MAJOR ATTACHED TO THE "JOINT COMMAND", THE UNIT RESPONSIBLE FOR INVESTIGATING POLITICAL CRIMES. BOTH MEN ARE BELIEVED TO BE SUPPORTERS OF THE DIRG.

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6. COMMENT: WHILE THE MILITARY IN ASMARA APPEAR TO BE CONFIDENT THAT IT HAS MATTERS IN HAND, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT ALL PARTIES HERE ARE WAITING FOR ACTION TO DEVELOP ELSEWHERE. AS NO LEADER HAS BEEN DESIGNATED TO ASSUME THE TITLE OF ACTING ADMINISTRATOR, WE SHALL TRY TO IDENTIFY THE INDIVIDUAL TO WHOM THE DELEGATION OF ELDERS REPORT ON THEIR RETURN TO ASMARA THIS WEEKEND. IT SEEMS MORE THAN COINCIDENTAL THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO REPORT OF INSURGENT INITIATIVES AGAINST THE ETHIOPIAN FORCES IN THE LAST FIVE DAYS.  
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**To:** STATE  
ADDIS ABABA INFO KHARTOUM  
LONDON  
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COMNAVTELCOM

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN  
COMIDEASTFOR  
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